Claims:

1.   A method of managing switch connections at a switching node in a communications system, the method comprising:

    providing connection requests from a higher level application to a connection manager in said switching node;

    processing said requests in said connection manager and generating a connection table therefrom; and

    based on said connection table, routing said commands from said connection manager to switch card elements in said switching nodes to carry out said requests.

2.   The method according to claim 1 wherein said commands are routed from said connection manager to said switch card elements through an abstraction layer in said connection manager.

3.   The method according to claim 2 wherein said connection table is generated from switch card related information stored in registers in switching card fabric software.

4.   The method according to claim 1 wherein said connection requests include connection related commands.

5.   The method according to claim 4 wherein said connection related commands include: call set-up; call teardown; modify; inquiry, and connection maintenance such as loopback tests.

6.   The method according to claim 1 wherein said connection requests include configuration related requests.

7.   The method according to claim 1 wherein said connection table includes input and output port information.

8.   The method according to claim 1 wherein said switch card elements support multiple configuration tables.

9.   A system for managing switch connections at a switching node in a communications network, said system comprising:

means for receiving connection specific requests from a higher level application;

a connection manager for processing said connection specific requests and generating a connection table which maps external ports to an internal switching matrix for use in routing said requests; and

switch card elements for receiving routing information and carrying out connection requests.

10.   The system as defined in claim 9 wherein said connection manager has an abstraction layer to provide an interface to said switch card elements.

11.   The system as defined in claim 9 wherein said switch card elements are card specific drivers.

12.   The system as defined in claim 9 wherein said connection tables include card related information downloaded from switch fabric card on system initialization.

13